Quality Assurance of Higher Education
The Case of Norway

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ABSTRACT
To improve quality of higher education, a reform process has been carried through at
Norwegian universities and colleges. This Quality Reform covers both public (state) and
private institutions of higher education. The Quality Reform has been a political, ambitious
project where finally the necessary legislative changes were introduced as from 1 July 2002.

Legislation is now equally applicable to public as well as private institutions.
To my mind some of the important regulations stimulating quality in higher education, are
concerned with

- An invariable rule that the institutions themselves are responsible for maintaining
  adequate quality in their teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge.
- Demands on new forms of student guidance, evaluation and assessment
- The establishing of Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)
  1 January 2003 as an independent state agency monitoring the quality of higher
  education by means of accreditation end evaluation for enhancement purposes.

Now, almost four years later, one may conclude in general terms that the Quality Reform has
been a success. It is not fair to isolate one single factor or a linear connection between cause
and success. It is my belief however, that the comprehensive and complex reform as such has
been beneficial for an improved quality: The institutions of higher education are more
systematic in their quality work. Quality-ambitions are spread more evenly between research
and education. The quality becomes more and more transparent to all. Standards and criteria
are well known and being debated, assessment reports are fully public, news papers are
interested. Hopefully this will all make up for a strengthened trust in higher education by
stakeholders.
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In the following I will present an overview of the structure of higher education in Norway, the
system of quality assurance, results and experiences from NOKUT's point of view.